

take me to worship

Two Dozen Ideas for helping Catholic parishes welcome and encourage participation **at the Catholic Churches of the Diocese of Erie:**

(compiled 2018)

(Some of these ideas have been successful in parishes in our diocese; other ideas are a result of research into what has helped other churches around our country and beyond, encourage regular participation at parishes.)



Welcome To Our Church Family



- 1) Family Breakfasts and Simple Supper Events (Soup/Salad/Dessert/Short talk)
- 2) Parish events that encourage bonding with other people from the community (Parish Festivals, Bingo Nights, Casino Nights, Dances, Youth Events, Golf Outings, Picnics)
- 3) Fellowship Gatherings after Masses once per month – Donuts/coffee/juice on Sundays; Wine & Cheese or other snacks & beverages on Saturday evenings
- 4) Service Projects for Parishioners for work that needs to be done at the parish or for work/collections in the community. Parishioners come together for soup and work on a service project together as a group.





Catholic Faith & Bible Studies

- 1) *Alpha* program www.alpha.org/catholic-context
- 2) *Christ Life* program- similar to *Alpha* www.christlife.org
- 3) *Christ Renews His Parish/Welcome* program
www.dynamiccatholic.com/welcome
- 4) Bible Studies/Spiritual Book Studies
 - * Use of resources from www.ascensionpress.com digital resources (must buy workbooks, but can stream programs free of charge)
 - * Use of programs from www.formed.org (must have parish subscription)
- 5) Holy Hours with Eucharistic Adoration – may also encourage families with children involvement by having shorter sessions with child care for the remaining time and social time after
- 6) Programs monthly like *Made 2 Worship* or monthly prayer groups



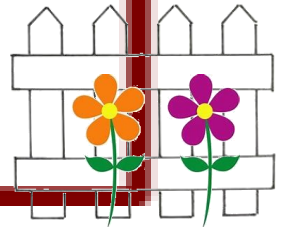
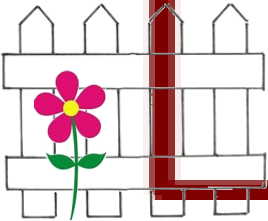


Family Faith Formation

- 1) Encourage Monthly Parent Participation at Faith Formation/ Socialization Events while their child/children are attending Religious Education Classes. (See some ideas for Family Catechesis on the FAM website under Resources for Families, <https://www.eriescd.org/familiesmatter>.)
- 2) Family Nights (Family Life Office has some suggestions on the FAM website under Activities for Families) – Some Ideas from Susan Vogt’s book, *Just Family Nights*.
- 3) Focus on FAMILY FAITH FORMATION with resources from www.LifelongFaith.com (under curated tab) John Roberto’s website, an expert in the area of family faith formation – presented a workshop at SMCC on 4/24/18; email jroberto@lifelongfaith.com with questions.
- 4) Encourage Dinnertime Spirituality resources such as *Feeding Your Family’s Soul* by Donna-Marie Cooper O’Boyle, *Pope Francis Family Devotional: 365 Reflections to Share with your Kids*, edited by Rebecca Vitz Cherico, *Table Prayers* by www.talkpoints.com, and *Praying as a Family* by the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecelia Congregation.
- 5) Research and implement Family Catechesis activities through resources from Pastoral Center (www.PastoralCenter.com or www.GrowingUpCatholic.com). These sites provide lesson plans, handouts, and electronic resources that can be used again and again by parishes for a one-time, affordable fee.

Small Christian Communities

- 1) Have small groups of people get together weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly to discuss Sunday readings and how they relate to their lives. This can be done with married couples, families, or individuals interested in faith sharing. (Contact Sr. Nancy Fischer for more info on Small Christian Communities – nfischer@eriercd.org or (814) 824-2210.)
- 2) Encourage small groups based around the *Christian Family Movement*, www.cfm.org, - for family groups; or *Teams of Our Lady*, www.teamsofourlady.org, - for married couple groups. (This group meets once monthly.)





Ways to Show Our Care and Concern

- 1) Groups provide outreach/small gift to parishioners with a recent marriage, new baby, or milestone wedding anniversary
- 2) Groups bake cookies for events, provide meals for those who are ill or widowed, and possibly hold bereavement or divorce groups at the parish (The Family Life Office will help parishes get the groups started if you have at least 4 volunteers from the parish who would be willing to be part of the team. Call/email (814) 824-1261; familylife@eriercd.org.)
- 3) *Prayer Shawl Ministry* and Masses for the sick and addicted
- 4) Parishioners participate in "Take Back the Site", (Erie Religious Sisters Initiative after an act violence in our community) "Silent Peace Walks" (Monthly – Benedictines for Peace, www.eriebenedictines.org) and/or "Take Back the Night" (Gannon Initiative – once yearly against sexual violence), Lectures at colleges about Catholic Issues, Catholic Social Teaching, and Catholic Doctrine. (Contact Patrice Swick, Director of the Social Justice and Life Office, for other ideas at SJL@eriercd.org or (814) 824-1254.)
- 5) Ministry to those from the parish who may need a call from a volunteer to check in on them on a regular basis – possibly shut-ins or those who are recovering from illness or the loss of a spouse from divorce or death.
- 6) Have parish councils, finance councils, and other parishioners read the book, *Rebuilt* by Michael White and Tom Corcoran. There is another book by the same authors that may be helpful called *Rebuilt Field Guide* that offers ten steps to help get started. These books are about a parish in Maryland called Church of the Nativity that has seen great growth in ministry and participation. They offer advice that may be helpful to any parish who has the open-mindedness to be honest about changes that may need to occur.
- 7) Train a facilitator for running a *Rainbows* program at your parish or school, www.rainbows.org. This program is for children who have experienced a loss through divorce, death, or deployment. This program meets the needs of children, especially children of divorce, who may not be served unless their parents take them to individual counseling. (Call/email the Family Life Office for more information, (814) 824-1261 or familylife@eriercd.org.)